

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

25X1A9a Present: Messrs. James Mitchell, Secretary of Labor; [REDACTED]  
In Office of Secretary of Labor, 3 Nov 1953, 4:30 - 5:15 P.M.

SUBJECT: Job Tenure and Job Security

1. The purpose of the conversation was to determine from a responsible Government official, not associated with security sensitive affairs, who has had wide experience both in Government and in private employment, and who is a recognized expert in personnel and labor matters, his views respecting job tenure and job security. No classified matters were discussed.

2. Tenure. Mr. Mitchell expressed the view that tenure is a relative matter; that there is no such thing as absolute tenure; and that tenure either in Government or in civil life was subject to such considerations as administrative necessity, or the desires of Congress, or the condition of the budget, etc. He used the examples that if the Congress decided to wipe out the Department of Labor by legislation, the tenure of all the persons now working in the Department of Labor was worthless; that if the Board of Directors of Macy's should decide to substantially change the operation of Macy's Department Store the tenure of all employees would be substantially affected. He stated that in the past year more than 8,000 commissioned officers in the Armed Forces had been separated, and therefore the tenure of commissioned personnel was also subject to qualifications. The question of applicable law and legislation on the matter of tenure was also discussed, and it was recognized that in Government, Civil Service status conveyed a degree of tenure, while in civilian employment tenure of unionized employees was conveyed through the contractual agreements between an employer and the applicable union. Generally speaking, in civilian employment the white-collar worker, the executive, the "intellectual" worker, had no tenure. Tenure could be conveyed by contract which would state the degree of tenure with respect to the time factor as well as to the conditions of employment. This example re-emphasized the fact that tenure as such was relative and conditioned by the terms of the particular tenure that was under consideration. In Mr. Mitchell's view the consideration of tenure was a will-o-the-wisp. He also expressed the view that the weakness of civilian employment of the U.S. Government was that such tenure as existed created a false sense of security, inhibited initiative and stimulated the retention of adequate though mediocre workers.

3. Job Security.

In Mr. Mitchell's view "job security" was all important, even though it was more of an intangible and, in a sense, similar to "morale". An individual acquired a sense of job security by having confidence that he would not be separated from his job for arbitrary or frivolous reasons. In Mr. Mitchell's view job security was the product of a good, and demonstrated, personnel policy. Three elements are essential: (1) The policy must be detailed and inclusive. All essential factors such as grievance procedures, employee evaluations, promotion for merit, etc., must be present. (2) The policy must be known throughout the organization and thoroughly understood not only by supervisors but by all employees. (3) The employee must have an opportunity to see that the announced policy is actually put into practice. Until an individual has confidence that the announced policy is actually being followed, there can be no feeling of job security.